Met Office

July 2006

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1961-1990.

UK overview

An exceptionally warm month. Many areas had their warmest July, with some areas also experiencing their warmest month (using areal series back to 1914). Sunshine was also exceptionally above average, with the sunniest areas compared to average over NE England. Rainfall was generally below average, although there were some notable exceptions.

England and Wales diary of highlights

Exceptionally warm and sunny, with below average rainfall.

1st to 4th: The 1st was sunny with very warm south-east winds. Overnight thundery showers drifted north into south-west England. On the 2nd south-west England, the West Country, the Midlands and north-west England had torrential thundery downpours and large hail. Rochdale (Greater Manchester) logged 43.8 mm in the 12 hours to 2100 UTC. At Heathrow Airport the temperature reached 32.3 °C. The 3rd brought further thundery showers to south-west England, south-west Wales and Cumbria. St Bee's Head (Cumbria) recorded 18.6 mm in the hour ending 1900 UTC. The 4th brought locally heavy and thundery rain to southwest England and southwest Wales. Later in the day, thundery showers drifted north from Sussex into central England, with reports of local flooding and hail in Luton, Bedfordshire.

5th and 6th: On the 5th a band of heavy and thundery showers spread out of France eventually extending from south-west England to the Humber. Intense showers developed over Wales and the north Pennines in the afternoon. Overnight into the 6th parts of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Wiltshire and Somerset had very heavy rain with 39 mm of rain falling at Brize Norton (Oxfordshire) in the hour to 0600 UTC and 54 mm in 12 hours ending 0900 UTC on the 6th. By afternoon heavy showers and thunder developed over eastern and central England with downpours in Lincolnshire.

7th to 12th: There was some rain on the 7th and 8th. Due to its persistence overnight, there were high rainfall totals over the hills of northern England. Shap (Cumbria) recorded 23.0 mm in the 24 hours to 0900 UTC on the 9th. Some rain spread across on the 10th, clearing south-east England early on the 11th to leave most places sunny and warm.

13th to 19th: The 13th started chilly with just 4.1 °C at Redesdale Camp (Northumberland). High pressure became established again over the UK on the 14th, lasting until the 18th. A dust devil was reported at Linton-on-Ouse (North Yorkshire) at 1100 UTC on the 14th. On the mornings of the 14th and 15th parts of northern England had a ground (grass) frost and on the morning of the 15th a ground frost was recorded as far south as Shawbury (Shropshire). Temperature values peaked on the 19th when 36.5 °C was recorded at Wisley (Surrey) and this set a new temperature record in the UK for July. A number of places broke their July temperature records, for example, Heathrow with 35.5 °C. The east and south coasts of England were kept cooler by onshore breezes with just 19.8 °C at Boulmer (Northumberland) on the 19th. Some rain clipped western fringes later on the 19th with thunder brushing the Isles of Scilly, east Kent and East Anglia in the evening.

20th to 22nd: There was some rain on the 20th. Thundery showers developed over parts of East Anglia in the afternoon and again the following evening. Thunderstorms across southern counties in the early hours of the 22nd gave downpours. Severe storms formed during the day from central Southern England into the Midlands

and later north-east England, covering a vast area. Many places recorded over 25 mm of rain in a short period and Monks Wood (Cambridgeshire) logged 30.2 mm of rain in the hour to 1500 UTC. At Brize Norton (Oxfordshire) between 1200 and 1300 UTC the temperature fell from 25.4 °C to 17.2 °C. At Cranwell (Lincolnshire) a gust of 54 knots was recorded at 0900 UTC.

23rd to 28th: A weakening band of rain spread east on the 23rd. The 24th was hot and sunny for most. Some light rain over East Anglia and the south-east on the 25th cleared to leave plenty of sunshine. There were some thundery showers across the southern half of England overnight and across East Anglia and the south-east the next afternoon and evening, with hail in places, and some very heavy rain over parts of Cambridgeshire. On the 27th there were further thunderstorms over southern England and in eastern counties as far north as Lincolnshire which gave very heavy rain in Surrey, flooding in Milton Keynes, and contributed to a landslip on the London Underground towards Heathrow. Cranwell (Lincolnshire) recorded a gust of 60 knots. Throughout this period it was still very warm or hot with 34 °C in central London on the 26th.

29th to 31st: A band of rain spread slowly eastwards on the 29th but largely decayed before it reached eastern England late in the day. The high temperatures held on for another day in East Anglia with 29.6 °C at Weybourne (Norfolk). The 30th brought some showers to the south-west, Wales and the Midlands, and on the 31st there were showers in many areas. A band of heavier rain developed from the Bristol Channel to the Wash, and there was also some heavy rain over northern England.

Scotland diary of highlights

July was dominated by anticyclones and warm air masses, with unsettled conditions limited to the second week and the last few days. A temperature of 25 °C or more was recorded somewhere in Scotland on 20 days, including 15 consecutive days between the 15th and 29th..

During the first six days a large anticyclone over the Baltic brought warm air on a light south-easterly breeze. Areas of cloud covered parts of the country and on the 2nd a trough over the south-east gave thundery showers, with 48 mm of rain falling at Longniddry. However, there was sufficient sunshine to raise temperatures to 28 °C at Eskdalemuir on the 2nd, with the same value reached at Aboyne on the 5th and 6th.

Between the 7th and the 12th low pressure near Iceland brought unsettled westerly weather, with bands of rain separating spells of sunny periods and showers. Eskdalemuir received 31 mm of rain on the 8th and it was much cooler than before, with Dundrennan recording maximum temperatures of 15 °C on the 7th and 12th.

A large anticyclone developed over Scotland on the 13th and became slow moving to the east for the next two weeks, bringing the long hot spell. It was relatively cool at first as air from the north-west settled over the country, accompanied by clear nights and sunny days. Temperatures fell to 0 °C at Tulloch Bridge on the 14th and 1 °C at Altnaharra the next day. On the 16th a warm front passed close to northwest Scotland, bringing more cloud to the north for a time. However, temperatures rose steadily day by day and 30 °C was reached at Aberdeen on the 17th, this being the highest temperature observed there since records began in 1942. The hottest day was the 19th, when Prestwick reached 31 °C.

A breakdown occurred on the 20th as a trough pushed through from the south-west, but it proved a feeble affair and it was not long before another pulse of hot air arrived. During this second phase of the hot spell there was some cloud in the north at first and isolated showers later. On most days the highest temperatures were recorded at Charterhall, with 30 °C being reached on the 25th.

Eventually Atlantic fronts crossed the country, bringing rain to the west on the 28th and to all parts on the 29th. Showery westerly weather prevailed on the last two days, with 27 mm of rain falling at Broadford on the 31st.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

A memorable month with plenty of dry, sunny and hot weather.

The month opened with warm sunny spells on the 1st and 2nd, but a few sharp showers affected northern and western areas in the late afternoons and evenings. Temperatures on both days reached 21 to 23 °C. The 3rd was a slightly fresher, cooler day and sunny spells developed after a grey start with afternoon highs near 21 °C.

Showery rain affected some areas early on the 4th and local thunderstorms gave 6 mm in an hour in some northern and western areas during the morning. These cleared though and as the afternoon brightened, sunny spells lifted temperatures to locally 24 °C. The 5th to the 7th had only a few light showers but many parts stayed dry with some pleasant sunshine at times.

By the 8th a deepening low pressure area brought thick cloud and rain to all areas and this was accompanied by blustery Southeast winds. The combination of wind and rain kept afternoon temperatures near 12 °C - easily the coolest day of the month.

The weather slowly improved between the 9th and 11th with some warm sunny spells developing and temperatures recovered again to 18 to 20 °C. The 12th was rather cloudy and damp again but brightened up later in the day with some late sunshine.

The 13th saw pressure rising and fine, summery weather became established for much of the rest of the month. Temperatures increased daily, becoming very warm and eventually very hot during the period 16th to 20th. Temperatures in many areas reached the high 20's and the maximum of 28.8 °C on the 19th at Belfast was the highest in July since 1989. The highest temperature recorded was 30.0 °C at Castlederg on the 18th - the highest anywhere in Northern Ireland since 1995.

A thundery trough gave 20-25 mm locally over Down and Antrim during the early hours of the 20th and 18,000 homes were left without power for a time as lightning strikes affected the electricity network. Fine, very warm weather soon became established again and the period between the 21st and 28th, although less hot, was still very warm and humid with little or no rain and temperatures frequently in the mid-20's. The 29th to 31st was the wettest period of the month with showers or some longer periods of sometimes heavy and thundery rain. 15-25 mm fell in many areas on the 28th / 29th and similar totals occurred on the 30th and 31st as active afternoon thunderstorms developed.

The rain in the last few days prevented a very dry month but sunshine values were well above average and many parts of Northern Ireland had their warmest July on record.

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